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Christian Høgsbjerg, ed., C.L.R. James, *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 222 pp.

Until recently, one little-known fact about C.L.R. James's famous Haitian revolution-based *The Black Jacobins* project was that it both began and ended life as a play, bookending the first and last editions of his classic history: the 1936 performance of the first play *Toussaint Louverture* antedates the initial 1938 publication of *The Black Jacobins* history by two years, while the second 1967 play *The Black Jacobins* comes more than four years after the revisions of the history for its second edition in 1963. It would be hard to overstate the importance of Christian Høgsbjerg's new critical edition of C.L.R. James's *Toussaint Louverture* because it makes widely available in published form for the first time the script of the elusive first play. For want of this playtext until 2013, James's quite different 1967 second play *The Black Jacobins* had been read as the 1936 play, and even billed as such when published in *The C.L.R. James Reader* edited in 1992 (67–111. See also King 2001, 2006; Sander 1986, 1988).

Publication of *Toussaint Louverture* is such a resource for all readers. There could be no better work with which to launch the important new C.L.R. James Archives Series, edited by Robert A. Hill for Duke University Press. Certainly, *Toussaint Louverture* fulfils the series aim of “[recovering] and [reproducing] for a contemporary audience the works of one of the great intellectual figures of the twentieth century.” Høgsbjerg's substantial introduction to the play edition reveals the “rich texture” of the original play, thoroughly grounding it in its many contexts.

Unfurled for the reader are the circumstances of its two 1936 performances, James's conception of *Toussaint Louverture*, his formative journey “From imperial Britishness to militant Pan-Africanism,” the “plot and politics” of the playscript, clashes of fiction and reality with respect to radical and black drama, counter-cultures of modernity, and the backdrop of Italy's invasion of Abyssinia. Interactions between James and legendary lead actor Paul Robeson are another important part of this work, while the aftermath of the play, and an overview of *Toussaint Louverture*'s place in history are also provided.

As well as providing an incisive intellectual history, Høgsbjerg makes important contributions to interpreting this play, complicating, for example, David Scott's illuminating argument in *Conscripts of Modernity* (2004) about the shift from the 1938 to the 1963 revised version of James's *The Black Jacobins* history, which is read by Scott as a shift away from anticolonial romance to postcolonial tragedy. For Høgsbjerg, *Toussaint Louverture* is

already inscribed in the 1930s play as a “tragic hero of the colonial enlightenment” (13).

This edition must also be highly commended for providing all readers with a wealth of essentials in the appendices, including a facsimile of the original 1936 programme, copies of contemporary reviews of the 1936 performances, as well as of the 1931 article “On the Intelligence of the Negro” in which James first invoked the greatness of Toussaint Louverture. There is also selected correspondence about the play, and James’s own essay about Paul Robeson’s significance. To be able to consult all of these crucial documents on and around the subject of the play is a real boon for any interested reader.

Høgsgjerg begins his introduction to the play by outlining the excitement of his auspicious find in 2005 of a copy of the play among the Jock Haston Papers at the Brynmor Jones Library at the University of Hull, which have since been relocated to the Hull History Centre [U DJH/21]. About this discovery, Høgsgjerg has observed that it is the “last major missing piece of his writing yet to be published” (2). It is on this particular Hull playscript that the critical edition is based. Similar outbursts of excitement to those expressed by Høgsgjerg are also barely contained in a 1998 letter from Jim Murray to Caribbean dramatist and academic Errol Hill, in which Murray declares: “I feel a little sheepish about having been so forward on the phone. I suppose I was carried away by your footnote, which I discovered the same week that Michelle [Stephens], Anna Grimshaw, and I had given up on the 30s MS” [Dartmouth ML-77 Box 48, Folder 48]. I too was excited to consult in 2004 several copies of the script in the C.L.R. James Collection of the West Indiana and Special Collections section of the Alma Jordan Library, University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad, which others had no doubt consulted before me [SC82 Box 9, Folder 227; Box 12, Folder 275]. Scholarship had previously been based on the copy of the play held in the Richard Wright papers at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University [JWJ MSS3 89 1102a], which is analyzed most notably by Mary-Lou Emery in her 2007 book *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*, in addition to one of the UWI scripts (259–260). Another recently unearthed script to receive attention is the copy held in the Alain Locke Papers of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington DC [“Writing by Others,” Box 164–186, Folder 8], that was the subject of a 2011 article by Fionnghuala Sweeney “The Haitian Play: C.L.R. James’ *Toussaint Louverture* (1936).” It is Høgsgjerg alone who has taken his exciting find and gifted it to a much wider reading public through this important publication.

On finding the Hull script, Høgsgjerg observes that all that was missing from the “long-lost original playscript was its author’s name on the front—C. L. R. James” (1). James’s actual name does feature prominently elsewhere on other copies of the script: on the coversheets of three copies held in UWI Box 9, Folder 227, and in the handwritten scrawl on the Moorland-

Spingarn script. This critical edition has opened the way for more work on the relative chronology and variants, which would be welcome.

In a useful editorial note, Høgsbjerg makes references to certain corrections made with pen over the Hull typed manuscript, which are assumed to have been made by James at the time. Many of the handwritten changes to the Hull and other scripts are only small changes of a minor order simply involving correction of the odd typo, or addition of a new word or letter here and there occasionally for emphasis, or a change of tense, or the more systematic introduction of correct French accents where needed, or other changes to punctuation.

Inspired by the critical edition of *Toussaint Louverture*, I have been working on a set of fascinating variants made in James's own distinctive hand to one of the three scripts housed in UWI Box 9, Folder 227. Here additions made to the first copy are far-reaching in terms of both scope and content. New focus on Moïse is made clear in copy one through numerous additions inserting the character of Toussaint's adopted nephew Moïse as James firmly writes him into a couple of scenes of this play. From the 1936 programme and reviews, it is clear that Moïse did not even feature at all as character in the 1936 performances; an indication which supports my idea that these additions were made later than 1936. All of the handwritten annotations in James's distinctive hand bear witness to his rethinking of the play in the intervening period between the 1936 and 1967 stagings., and allow me to speculate on dating this UWI script to after the 1936 performance. While completely absent from the *Toussaint Louverture* play as performed, Moïse will become a central character around whom *The Black Jacobins* 1967 play will revolve, as he becomes an alternative protagonist to rival his adoptive Uncle Toussaint.

Moïse is inserted at the end of Act I, Scene 3 point as fellow-witness to all the hypocrisy and treachery among the top-ranking leaders. Silent witness Moïse corroborates by nodding his head to acknowledge the duplicity of both leaders and their quest for their own personal aggrandisement. Toussaint's previously monologic despair now has a new interlocutor. Handwritten additions to the playscript are marked in bold, while deletions are struck through:

TOUSSAINT (his head in his hands) ~~Oh~~ **(To Moïse: Did you hear? Moïse shakes nods.)** Oh God! These are the men on whom the fate of the black race depends. What future is there for us!

This means that Moïse is crucially also present for the Raynal reading. To close this scene, insertions have Moïse sharing Toussaint's reading of the famous Raynal (Diderot) passage: "A courageous chief only is wanted..." Sharing this act of reading with Toussaint, a number of lines are reattributed to Moïse:

MOÏSE: White men see Negroes as slaves. If the Negro is to be free, he must free himself. We have courage, we have endurance, we have numbers. (1.3.31)

Then added stage directions have them reciting the rousing climax of that passage in unison:

(Toussaint reading, while Moïse who knows the words by heart, repeats them with him):

Where is he? That great man whom Nature owes to her vexed, oppressed and tormented children?

MOÏSE: Thou hast shown me the light, oh God! I shall be that leader.

From the crossing-out of the speech attribution of the final two lines of the passage, we can see that James hesitated about how to share them out, toying at one point with allocating the final rousing lines to Moïse. Instead, the fact that they both recite these lines together is highly symbolic, clearly depicting them both as a united force tied by close bonds, and as a pair of strong/perspicacious leaders, who share the same intellectual formation and voracious re-reading of inspiration anti-slavery writings about freedom, which are depicted here as their initial intellectual springboard for projecting their future revolutionary roles. Significantly, Moïse is here given the lines that equate best with his unequivocal views about true independence freedom, and self-activity of the masses. Above all their togetherness and close relationship is stressed.

Close ties are also stressed when Moïse enters this part of the scene (1.3.29–30). Additions here are rather higgledy-piggledy with a number of arrows pointing in various directions, asterisks, and instructions along the lines of “Remove to next page,” “Add over the next page,” “Insert ***.” Possibly prior to Moïse’s re-entry onto the scene—it is not too clear from James’s handwritten directions—a key addition is made to Toussaint’s request to form a company of his own: Moïse must be an instrumental member of that new company:

Toussaint: I want my nephew to be my aide-de camp.

B-M: Take him. I’ll tell Dessalines. (1.3.29)

In terms of order, it is not clear where exactly each one of these insertions should go but at some point during the Toussaint–Boukman exchange Boukman instructs Moïse to “stand aside,” thus introducing the pretext for Moïse to eavesdrop and bear witness to the duplicity of intrigues between the rival leaders.

Another scene where Moïse is similarly introduced by hand, and where he is clearly given an even more extensive and pivotal role is Act II, Scene 1. Close familial bonds linking Moïse to Toussaint are always stressed throughout this particular scene to a much greater extent than the previous scene discussed (Act I, Scene 3). Whenever they address each other, which is frequently in what is added, attention is drawn firmly to the closeness of their uncle–nephew relationship:

Moïse ~~DESSALINES~~: Uncle Toussaint. (2.1.14)

TOUSSAINT: [...] King of San Domingo! Well, **Moïse ~~Christophe~~.
You as my nephew will be a prince** (II.1.16)

Moïse ~~DESSALINES~~: **Uncle Toussaint**, you are too soft with these people. You will pay for it one day. What are you going to do now? (Ibid.)

Moïse ~~DESSALINES~~: **An expedition** ~~It~~ is coming in any case. **Uncle, you say** ~~Toussaint says~~ be loyal to France (II.1.17)

TOUSSAINT: **My boy**, I know. (Ibid.)

Moïse ~~DESSALINES~~: [...] Finish with all this loyalty, **Uncle** ~~Toussaint~~. (Ibid.)

Moïse ~~DESSALINES~~: **What is this Consul business** **Uncle?**
~~Confidence in a white man. Take the offer~~ ~~Toussaint~~. (II.1.19)

Familial ties linking Toussaint and his adopted nephew Moïse are repeatedly stressed, to the point that their closeness is depicted as being tantamount to a father and son relationship. Drama has a way of tightly compressing relationships, as Lindenbergher has argued (150–52). As Moïse is here presented as Toussaint's proxy son, this compresses father-son type family bonds as tightly as possible. Intimacy of these close-knit bonds is compressed still further in other ways too. Gesture is also used to demonstrate their inseparability, and the fact that they address each other by name so often is also an indication of the intimacy they share:

TOUSSAINT: [...] **Good-night, Moïse** [...] **Gentlemen, and Moïse, (putting his hand on his shoulder) among other uses the night is for sleep. Moïse, wait outside.**

From being completely absent in all other full-length scripts of this play Moïse is suddenly propelled by all these additions into becoming Toussaint's closest and most trusted collaborator and advisor as attested to by Toussaint's added closing discussion with Dessalines over promoting Moïse as rapidly as possible through all the ranks:

Dessalines: I shall promote him to Brigadier General (OVER) and make him governor of the Limbé district.

Dessalines [...]

Toussaint: He has influence. He must have responsibility. (II.1.19–extra page)

Like so many of the added lines during this later rewriting, handwritten insertions are sometimes only partial in nature, and do not always make it clear how everything fits together. In the above case, for example, there is a first speech attribution to Dessalines, which is then immediately followed by a second speech attribution to Dessalines. It is quite plausible then, that the two successive speech attributions to the same character Dessalines, are a mistake, and that the first of these should correctly be attributed to Toussaint, and not to Dessalines, especially as the idea of the promotion would seem more likely coming from Toussaint, and not from Moïse's rival Dessalines.

Generally, the rewriting of this script is incomplete. Moïse is inserted into these two scenes only, and nowhere do we have represented or alluded to the resolution of Moïse's fate: the execution of Moïse on Toussaint's orders. In *The Black Jacobins* 1967 play, this sentencing to death/execution of Moïse

scene forms the centrepiece of the entire play. Handwritten annotations in this script of the *Toussaint Louverture* play are, however, clearly working towards this dénouement, even if the narrative/story thread is left hanging unresolved precisely at that point where family-type bonds could not be any tighter. Familial ties linking Toussaint and his adopted nephew Moïse will be emphasized even more strongly throughout the 1967 play, where compression of the father-son Uncle-nephew close-knit relationship between this pair builds up to the presentation of Toussaint's sentencing to death of his adopted son/nephew as the most outrageous violation of this, the closest of relationships, which occupies a position at the very epicentre of the second play.

Combined all the handwritten insertions reveal a picture of James in the process of rethinking his first play, while working towards the second one where Moïse will eventually go on to take centre-stage. Likewise many of the additions contribute to sketching out budding aspects of Moïse's characterization which will be developed still further in the second 1967 play. These handwritten additions therefore seem to constitute an intermediate staging post on the road from James's first 1936 *Toussaint Louverture* play to his second 1967 *The Black Jacobins* one.

Short shrift is given by Høgsbjerg to the second play when he accepts the judgement of British playwright Arnold Wesker that the play has something "wooden" about it, concluding remarkably quickly that "the richness of character that defines *Toussaint Louverture* is absent from *The Black Jacobins*" (28). Such a snap judgement seems unfair because it echoes the write-offs of the 1936 *Toussaint Louverture* play in reviews of the time; positions which Høgsbjerg puts to bed through his great work of scholarship on this critical edition. If we should no longer dismiss out of hand the *Toussaint Louverture* play as some sort of unsuccessful prequel to the history, then surely the same goes for seeing the second 1967 *The Black Jacobins* as an unsuccessful sequel. While the 1967 play can be seen as an evolution of the 1936 play, it is important to note that the latter differs so greatly from the former that it is essentially a different play. Instead of a sequel, the 1967 play should be seen as a substantial revision. Productions of that play in places like Nigeria, Jamaica, Trinidad, London, and Barbados met with some great acclaim, although there were some negative reviews too.

Almost exactly fifty years to the day from *Toussaint Louverture*'s first performance, *The Black Jacobins* was put on the London stage again in February–March 1986. One previewer of that production noted the "raw racism" of *The Stage*'s 1936 review when it noted "the author's bias in the [black actors'] favor would appear to deny the whites a shred of nobility or honesty of purpose." To which 1986 reviewer Brenda Kirsch retorted "Quite." For Kirsch, the 1986 production was an opportunity to see "How far white society's awareness of racism [had] progressed in the last fifty years." Unfortunately, racism also underlies some of the most hysterically negative reviews of the 1986 London production, for example when Nicholas de Jongh

memorably wrote in *The Guardian* that “An odour of theatrical mothballs” permeated Talawa Theatre Company’s production, or Della Couling from *The Tablet*’s accusations of “stodgy drainadoc.” As director of the London 1986 production Yvonne Brewster recalls in an interview, even in Britain of the 1980s “it wasn’t the right thing for them [these reviewers]. They didn’t want to see all these black people on stage. Let’s face it: there was racism then, and there’s racism now, there will always be racism, but in 1985 it was *really heavy* because the stage stank of money, the set was amazing, the costumes were wonderful.”

It is wonderful after all these years that Høgsgjerg has finally hit all sorts of assumptions about the 1936 play’s low worth on the head, but it seems unfair to dismiss *The Black Jacobins* 1967 play out of hand in this way too. What is certain with the publication of *Toussaint Louverture* more than seventy-five years after it was first performed is that Høgsgjerg has generously opened the way for others to compare the play versions of not just *Toussaint Louverture* and *The Black Jacobins*, but also those of other classic plays about the Haitian revolution.

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